

MEET SOUTH AFRICA

Expert Interview

Over the years the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB), has partnered with a wide variety of organisations across a number of key sectors to bring business events to South Africa. In this series of expert interviews, we engaged with a number of industry leaders to gain insight into their sectors and unpack the incredible work they do and their association with the SANCB. These partnerships are important to SANCB and are a key part of the recovery plan for South Africa's business events industry.

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SECTOR: BUSINESS OUTSOURCING



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Tshepo Thlaku, JCI South Africa Foundation Chairperson

Founder and CEO of Pulego Technologies

Born and raised in Temba, Pretoria, primarily by a single mother, Tshepo Thlaku learnt important principles and values through struggles faced and challenges overcome. A product of society, Tshepo grew up in a community that taught him it is important to take care of yourself and other people and contribute to the greater society.

With an understanding that by strengthening communities, individuals' lives can be changed. His upbringing is a testament to the fact that if a community sees potential (or challenges) in individuals, they will collectively take the necessary steps and actions to contribute to that person's success in small yet meaningful ways. It is for this reason that Tshepo has a passion for working in communities and giving back to society. An ethos that marries perfectly with his work as Foundation Chairperson of Junior Chamber International South Africa.

Now a seasoned entrepreneur, Tshepo started honing his business acumen and leadership skills from a very young age. When protest violence and unfortunate circumstances left his mother unemployed, the family took to selling various items to survive. Added to this, not being able to afford to pursue tertiary education had Tshepo selling juice outside the very school he matriculated from whilst he applied for bursaries and subsequently maintaining a landscaping business during the varsity years to survive. During these formative years, he picked up the entrepreneurial spirit and humble business resilience that has held him in good stead today.

Journey to ICT and Junior Chamber International

Initially looking to study Sports Management after securing a bursary, Tshepo's life path, however, took an exciting turn and he ended up at TUT. During this time the institution was looking for students to study ICT, which was an exciting new field at the time. Securing the Nelson Mandela bursary during his studies put him in a better financial position and exposed him to many other opportunities that shaped his future.



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Whilst studying, Tshepo became part of AIESEC (formerly known as Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales), an International Student Exchange Programme that as an organisation focused on leadership development for students by getting them involved in community projects and conferences. Through AIESEC, Tshepo relocated to Cameroon, working for the Association for Development, Communication and Environment (ADCOM), installing computers, and supplying connectivity in rural schools in partnership with MTN Cameroon. During his tenure, he discovered Junior Chamber International (JCI). JCI is a non-profit organisation of young active citizens aged 18 to 40 who are engaged and committed to creating an impact in their communities. JCI creates active citizens and individuals who are invested in the future of our world. They gather young people from all sectors of society and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding to make informed decisions and act. At JCI, Tshepo learnt about leadership by becoming involved in community projects which furthered his entrepreneurship knowledge. Further to this, he got valuable international exposure and worked his way to being the JCI Executive Vice President assigned to Africa and the Middle East. After serving in various roles as an international officer, Tshepo turned his focus back home by supporting younger leaders in JCI South Africa as the Foundation Chairperson of the organisation.

SANCB the Bid Support Programme

In 2007, JCI was given the opportunity to host a conference for Africa and the Middle East. However, with little exposure to the business tourism side, they had to lean on JCI International to deliver the conference. Consequently, they were introduced to SANCB and SAT and partnered with them to bring in the 2016 JCI Africa and the Middle East conference and the 2021 JCI World Congress, the latter hosted as a hybrid event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both events were a great success due to the contribution they made. The incentives brought about by SANCB made it easy to host international events because the SANCB work with organisations to deliver a quality South Africa, as a business event destination. From the lobbying, and bidding to the hosting—they work with you all the way and the incentives make a solid impact. It would be near impossible for non-profit/member-based associations to host international events if it wasn't for the support of the SANCB. When organisations go out to bid and represent the country, they take on the role of brand ambassadors and brand bearers. Over and above this, when business events are hosted in South Africa, they create employment and expose people to the incredible destination of SA. Conferencing in the youth development sector. The JCI holds conferences in different locations and exposes young African people to these events, thereby exposing them to the world.

It is said the biggest boom in the world economy is in Africa, so these conferences expose the young people that will be creating and managing the economy to the world they will be operating in—whilst simultaneously teaching them to be brand ambassadors. In this role they can sell the heart of the continent and bring the people they interact with world wide to Africa. JCI is a university of life – developing leaders for a changing world. Through their initiatives, they expose young people to the world and prepare them to be leaders in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. In these spaces, they get to understand the dynamics of what happens outside of their own country in terms of the geopolitics, economic differences, etc. Giving people exposure through business events and conferences is important so they can see how they can confidently contribute to the global community and attract the global community to enable economic activity in their communities. South Africa is a beautiful country with a rich heritage to offer to the rest of the world. It is also aspiring to be a world-class destination when it comes to infrastructure. The business event offering in South Africa is world class, the ease of access is incredible, and the technology is amazing. Not only is the weather a key selling proposition, the incredible facilities, technology, facilities, leisure options and business opportunities are all world class.

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